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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 000869

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KWBG](#) [IR](#) [JO](#)
SUBJECT: KING AND QUEEN OUTLINE IRANIAN "NEMESIS" FOR
VISITING STAFFDEL

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Classified By: Ambassador David Hale for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

1. (C) Speaking to members of an Jordanian MFA-organized delegation of staffers from the U.S. Senate, King Abdullah and Queen Rania stressed the threat Iran poses to security and stability in the region, and linked the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to the rise of Iranian influence in the region. The King asserted that a collapse of the peace process would strengthen Iran's hand. The Queen added that economically strong, politically moderate alternatives in the region are the only thing that will ultimately defeat Iran's influence. Asked about the utility of direct engagement with Iran, the King believed that it would likely prove unfruitful, and any such initiative would have to be accomplished with delicacy and full consultation with America's allies in the region. Both the King and the Queen spoke about their efforts to build a solid economic future for the young people of Jordan. In closing, the King spoke highly about his recent visit to the United States. End Summary.

The Iranian Threat

2. (C) Opening up the meeting, the King said that he believes that in the post-Annapolis peace talks, the parties will at some stage need U.S. intervention to close gaps on core issues, as the parties will be unable to do so on their own. He urged that the U.S. look at the Israeli/Palestinian issue in its regional context. "Failure (of the peace talks) will give Iran and its proxies exactly what they're looking for," the King asserted. He stated his belief that the Iranian regime is playing for time, working to block a solution to the Palestinian problem before the end of the Bush presidency, in order to strengthen the hands of militants throughout the Middle East. Iran was also advising the Syrian leadership to wait for a new administration before embarking on any Golan initiative. The King referred to the "Iranian nemesis" and noted its "signature" in the conflicts of the region, and its presence by proxy on the Mediterranean, as evidence of its growing influence and confidence. The King stressed that we should "connect the dots" between regional stability and Iranian influence, and avoid compartmentalizing Iran, Iraq and the peace process. The King said failure on the peace process would make Iran even more aggressive, compel a Sunni Arab response, and thus deepen conflict in Lebanon and Iraq. A lot was at stake in the peace process this year to preserve U.S. interests in the region, he said.

3. (C) Queen Rania chimed in on the issue as well, saying

that success for moderate Arab states was critically important in order to defeat Iran's agenda. She said that Jordan was trying to become a model, a place where people say, "this is the kind of country we want to live in." The Queen said this is the only strategy that will ultimately work in countering Iranian influence - "this is what they're afraid of." Jordan's economic reforms and support for education are part of that overall effort, but the going is tough - the Queen said that "sometimes it feels like we're swimming against the current."

¶4. (S/NF) Asked about direct U.S. engagement with Iran, the King replied, "it depends on what you're trying to achieve." He sees Iran as a revolutionary power first and foremost. As such, it will either continue to expand (both in terms of territory and in terms of influence), or it will implode. In this context, the King wondered, "are they willing to deal sensibly with you?" If a mutually beneficial dialogue is started, the King said it should be behind the scenes, and at a low level. Any expansion to a more formal relationship would have to be accomplished with constant consultations between the U.S. and its allies - it is not something that Arab leaders should learn about from the press. In the end, however, the King betrayed his underlying skepticism that direct contact with Iran would be fruitful.

Youth and Opportunity

¶5. (C) The King and Queen both touched briefly on outreach to youth in Jordan. Citing a recent poll, the King indicated that the younger generation is concerned less with politics and more with jobs. He believes that building a solid middle class in Jordan is the key to keeping radicalism under wraps. "If the youth have hope, they'll be a stabilizing factor," added the Queen. In the end, they both cited supply and demand in the job market as the critical factor in Jordan's

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future. The King noted his recent visit to the poor rural town of Shobak, in which he encountered a seamstress in a garment factory who was college-educated. Investing in education is a worthy goal, he noted, but jobs must be waiting for those trained workers if the economy is to advance as a whole.

Visit Feedback

¶6. (C) The King told the staffdel how pleased he was with his recent trip to the United States. "It's the best visit I've had in seven and a half years. I left extremely optimistic," he said.

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